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SUBJECT: S/CT AMBASSADOR BENJAMIN MEETS WITH UN
COUNTER-TERRORISM REPRESENTATIVES

¶1. Summary: In an August 25 visit to the UN, S/CT Ambassador Daniel Benjamin met with Richard Barrett, Coordinator, Al-Qaida/Taliban Monitoring Team (UNSCR 1267), Mike Smith, Executive Director, Counter-terrorism Executive Directorate (CTED), and the acting Chair of the Security Council Counter Terrorism Committee (Ranko Vilovic, Croatia's Deputy Permanent Representative). Ambassador Benjamin also met with Robert Orr and Jean Paul Laborde to discuss the Counter-terrorism Implementation Task Force (CTITF). The meetings provided an opportunity for Ambassador Benjamin to convey the U.S. strategy on countering terrorism in the international community and to meet the UN's major Counter-terrorism (CT) representatives. End Summary.

1267 Chairman Richard Barrett

¶2. Richard Barrett, chair of the 1267 Monitoring Team, told Ambassador Benjamin that the 1267 regime had been an effective counter-terrorism tool, but that the 1267 Committee needed to take action with respect to issues of due process in order to preserve the long-term vitality of the sanctions regime. Noting that most people see 1267 as an American-led regime, he said that the current challenges facing the regime presented an "opportunity for clear U.S. leadership." He noted that the 1267 regime, which is now ten years old, could probably not be replicated in the current political environment.

¶3. Barrett emphasized the urgent need for the Committee to scrub inappropriate listings in the context of the Committee's comprehensive review of all the names on its Consolidated List. In his opinion, Barrett said, states had been too conservative in deciding when to propose de-listing names. He noted that as a result of evolving Committee practices, it was likely that that some "bad guys" would not be added/retained on the Committee's List in the future. Accepting a smaller -- but more credible -- Consolidated List, Barrett asserted, was probably the price for preserving the regime as an effective counter-terrorism tool. In response, Ambassador Benjamin said that he was committed to reinvigorating the multilateral side of counter-terrorism by working with the 1267 Committee and others to ensure that the regime remained effective.

CTED Executive Director Mike Smith

¶4. Ambassador Benjamin told CTED Director Smith that under its new administration the United States will focus on countering violent extremism, will take a more multilateral approach in this effort and will try to get the "made in America" stamp off the UN's CT agenda. Benjamin also said that the United States greatly supports UN capacity building efforts and praised the efforts of the UN's Office on Drugs and Crimes in this area and will try to develop a good dialogue to fill capacity building gaps. As an example, Ambassador Benjamin said that bolstering the UN/G8 dialogue on CT issues might be a way to fill such gaps.

¶ 15. Smith responded that he thought a U.S. multilateral focus and working through UN institutions to address CT issues is the right way forward. Smith also conveyed that he thought that interaction between the UN and the G8/CTAG on CT issues had not been particularly productive. Although the Japanese, he said, had made a great effort to increase the UN/CTAG dialogue, no real action resulted. He also said that CTED is a small unit with only 38 people and an annual budget of \$8 million. By comparison, Smith said that when he was Australia's CT Ambassador, he had a staff of 40 people and an annual budget of \$450 million allowing him to make great strides forward in terms of capacity building in Southeast Asia. Smith said that although CTED is continuing to make assessments of states' implementation of UNSCR 1373, he doesn't have the people or the resources to make a significant positive impact in countering international terrorism.

¶ 16. One step CTED is taking, Smith said, is to hold two meetings in November, one in Islamabad and the other in Dhaka to build CT capacity. Smith said the Islamabad meeting (partially funded by the World Bank) will be a training session for Pakistani parliamentarians on terrorism finance and the Dhaka workshop will be for police officers and will focus on communication issues. Ambassador Benjamin enthusiastically supported CTED's upcoming meetings in Pakistan and Bangladesh and said he would make sure the U.S. Regional Strategic Initiative (RSI) officers in the region were made aware of CTED's agenda.

¶ 17. In response to Ambassador Benjamin's question as to what other regions of the world CTED would focus its efforts,

Smith said that East Africa is of particular importance as it is a region that has significantly weak border controls. Smith said that he planned to engage three English speaking countries in the region, Uganda, Tanzania and Kenya as a first step and said that overall communication is an issue in each of these countries as border posts are not linked into capitals. On another issue, Smith conveyed that institutionalization of the CTITF is a good idea and that in New York the offices of CTED and the CTITF should be co-located to maximize information sharing.

Robert Orr, UN Assistant Secretary-General for Policy Planning
Jean Paul Laborde, Executive Director, Counter-terrorism
Implementation Task Force

¶ 18. In his meeting with Jean Paul Laborde and Robert Orr, Ambassador Benjamin explained that reinvigorating multilateral CT activities at the UN is one of his three top goals as the U.S. CT Coordinator. Orr commented that there have been a number of major shifts in counter-terrorism at the UN since Ambassador Benjamin was involved in CT issues under the Clinton Administration. Orr said the UN Global Counter-terrorism Strategy opened a lot of doors for CT engagement with other countries, resulting in a number of countries asking for UN help in dealing with their own domestic CT issues. He also shared that the UN has also developed mechanisms for working with countries, including the Integrated Assistance program for Countering Terrorism. Orr said early efforts have focused on countries with relatively manageable terrorism issues and a high degree of willingness to work with the UN and acknowledged that the greater challenge is to move towards working with countries that have more complex and high level terrorism concerns.

¶ 19. Jean Paul Laborde, now the head of the UN's Counter-terrorism Implementation Task Force (CTITF), stated that a major goal of his in chairing the CTITF is to improve coordination with CTED and other UN CT groups, and to increase prevention and mediation projects, such as those currently underway in Central Asia and the Sahel. Ambassador Benjamin responded that the United States is currently in a strategy formation stage for the Sahel, and

that he will be talking to some European partners in September about a variety of issues including this one. Laborde noted that he would deliver a paper on the CTITF's activities in this area to Ambassador Benjamin prior to the Ambassador's September meetings. Laborde reiterated that the primary role of CTITF was to get other CT UN players to act and work together, rather than to do CT work on its own. Ambassador Benjamin emphasized his support for the work of the CTITF as well as for the organization's institutionalization, and noted that he looked forward to working with both Orr and Laborde in the future.

Acting CTC Chair, Croatian Deputy Permanent Representative Ranko Vilovic

¶10. Ambassador Benjamin's meeting with Croatian Deputy Permrep Ranko Vilovic revealed only that Vilovic acknowledged his responsibility to chair CTC meetings but presented no agenda for the next few months and conveyed that he thought any significant next steps would be taken when Turkey takes over as Chairman in January, 2009.

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